DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 258 743 RC 015 304

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TITLE Quality Gifted Education in Small, Rural Schools.
PUB DATE Oct 84
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Rural and Small Schools Conference (6th, Manhattan, KS, October 29-30, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Achievement Tests; *Elementary Secondary Education; *Gifted; Program Administration; Program Costs; *Program Design; *Rural Schools; *Small Schools; Talent Identification

ABSTRACT

Small, rural schools have proportionately as many gifted students as larger schools and can have quality gifted educational programs. As in large schools, identification involves staff and self-referral and systematic record evaluations. Referral reviews determine if needs are being met in regular classrooms, suggest alternative strategies for regular teachers, and recommend individual evaluation for students whose needs are not met. Those students are administered a battery of intelligence and achievement tests. Advanced services may be offered and students may have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) developed. Parents must be informed of their rights and students must be carefully monitored. As students frequently create their own materials and the coordinator is capable of handling effectively a comparably large number of gifted, such programs are less expensive than most regular educational programs. Community support is important and it is recommended that the name gifted be avoided. The program director should have experience in the field, be versed in federal and state regulations, and be given sufficient time for the paperwork involved. Arrangements may also be made to offer special, advanced services to students even though they do not meet the state criteria for identification of gifted students. (PM)

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ED258743

QUALITY GIFTED EDUCATION IN SMALL, RURAL SCHOOLS

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RC015304

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ABSTRACT

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Subject Area: Gifted education

Title of Presentation: Quality Gifted Education in Small, Schools

OUTLINE

I. Small, rural schools CAN have quality programs for their gifted students.

A profile of the gifted student in the small, rural school.

II. A rationale for gifted programs in small, rural schools.

III. Identification procedures for gifted students in the small, rural schools.

IV. Financing gifted programs.

V. Community involvement in your gifted programs.

VI. Working with parents in your program.

VII. Some helpful suggestions for designing, implementing, conducting and evaluating your gifted education program.

A. Naming the Director of the program.

B. Naming the program.

C. Providing for students who are not formally identified.

D. Meeting state and federal requirements for gifted programs.

E. Case management for gifted education including the use of forms and record keeping.

VIII. Conclusion

Summary of procedures for designing and managing a comprehensive program for gifted students in a small school.

QUALITY GIFTED EDUCATION IN SMALL, RURAL SCHOOLS

Small, rural schools can have quality gifted educational programs. Further, these small districts have, proportionately, as many gifted students as larger school districts and the need for such programs is greater in the smaller districts. In the larger communities there are many cultural and advanced educational opportunities for students. In the smaller, rural areas, however, if the school doesn't provide these types of experiences, often they will not be provided. These comments are especially true for the young women in the smaller, rural communities. Without special encouragement, these young women all-to-often do not maximize their educational potential and seek higher education after graduation from high school.

Identification in the smaller, rural schools is similar to identification procedures in any school. There should be a systematic review of student records and recommendations by faculty and staff for evaluating students. This should be done each year and self-referrals as well as parent referrals should be encouraged. From these referrals, the Building Team Committee, should review each of these referrals, determine if the students needs are being met in the regular classroom, suggest alternative educational strategies for the regular

classroom teacher and finally recommend a comprehensive, individual evaluation for any student whose needs are not being met in the regular classroom. Explanation must be given to parents and students who are not selected to go beyond this initial screening process. Service may be given to these students even though they do not meet the established criteria for state programs. However, it is important to note that these students may not be claimed for reimbursement of state funds!

Students who are recommended for individual evaluation must be given individual intelligence tests, individual achievement tests, have a diagnostic counseling/psychological interview and be tested in any other area of need such as personality. They should also have a reliable Learning Style Inventory and have their vision, hearing and speech evaluated. The students will either "make the grade" or they will not. Here again, the district may choose to offer special, advanced services to students even though they do not meet the State criteria for identification of gifted students. Also, again, the student and the parents need to know the results of these evaluations and specifically what this means in terms of their student's

education. Students formally identified will have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) developed, parents will be informed of all their rights and the student's progress will be carefully monitored in terms of PL 942 and any accompanying or clarifying State Laws, rules and regulations.

Gifted educational programs are actually less expensive than most regular educational programs and all vocational-type programs. Students frequently create their own materials and the coordinator of the programs works with students in a variety of academic areas. Most states have some limits as to the numbers of students each coordinator can work with, but it is far above the number allowed for teachers of the handicapped and disabled. Further, gifted coordinators must do their own administrative and paper work which is often burdensome and time consuming. Often one coordinator will work with all High School students and even with all students in a district.

It is essential that the community support a program designed to encourage the gifted students. It is advisable that

the name "gifted" not be used. Everyone is "gifted," and it hurts people not to be selected into such a group. "Expanded Learning," Extended Learing," or some other title for the program is suggested. A parent group should be formed as an advisory group before a program is developed. Public relations is also important to the program. News releases of activities of students should be regularly submitted to the available news media. It is also very important that parents be involved in the program and kept informed of all aspects, positive and negative, of the program.

Some "tried and true" helpful hints for the small, rural school in developing, implementing and evaluating Gifted Educational Programs:

Name a Director of the Program. This person should be certified in gifted education, and, if possible, have experience in the field. The person should be given an adequate budget and time to do the job of organizing the program. This could be a "half-time" position and is easily

coupled with "counseling, special educational administration, or a teaching position, especially in the core academic areas such as math, reading, social science or natural science.

We have already discussed naming the program such that it connotates a positive, advanced-type of program, not an "elitist" type of program.

Provisions should be made early in the program planning for very capable students, whose needs are not being met in the regular classroom - yet who do not qualify for the state-level guidelines. These students may be given gifted educational services, but they do not require the paperwork required of formally identified students. IEP's for example, are not required. However, these students may not be claimed for any reimbursement.

The Director of the Program must be well versed in all aspects of federal (PL-94-142) and state rules and regulations. It is important that "Service to students" be

the primary goal of the program, but compliance is also essential.

The Director must also assume responsibility for the "case management" for each individual. Progress must be made in all areas of identification and follow-up and evaluation of the quality of services.

In conclusion - it is possible for even the smallest, most isolated schools to offer quality services to gifted students of all types and talents. For detailed information, answers to specific questions, or other information on any aspect of gifted education, please call or write: Dr. Allen D. McCune, Psychologist, Halstead Public Schools, Halstead, Kansas 67056, (313) 835-2682